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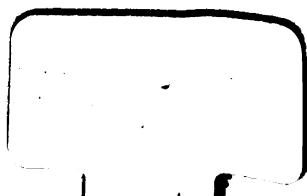


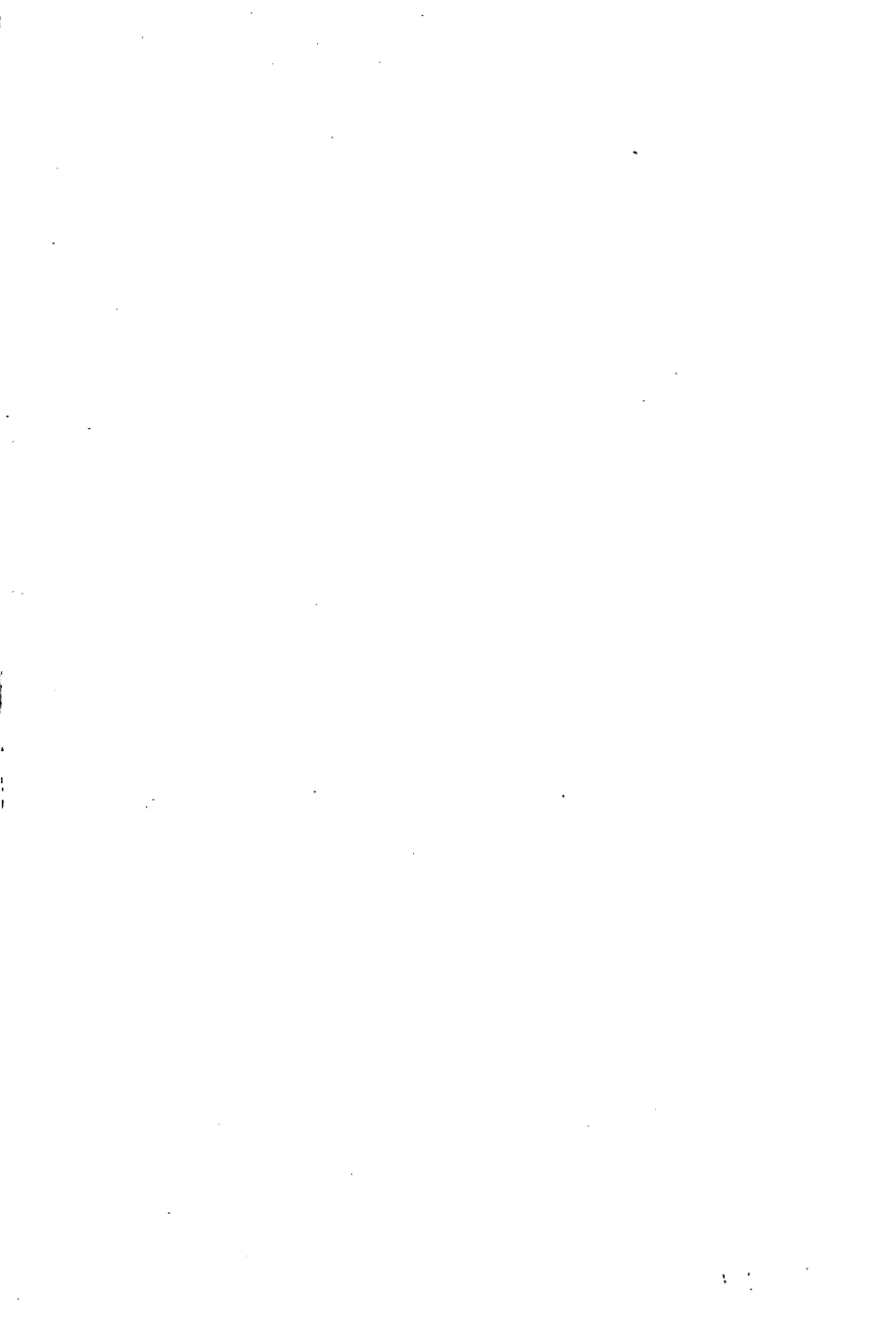
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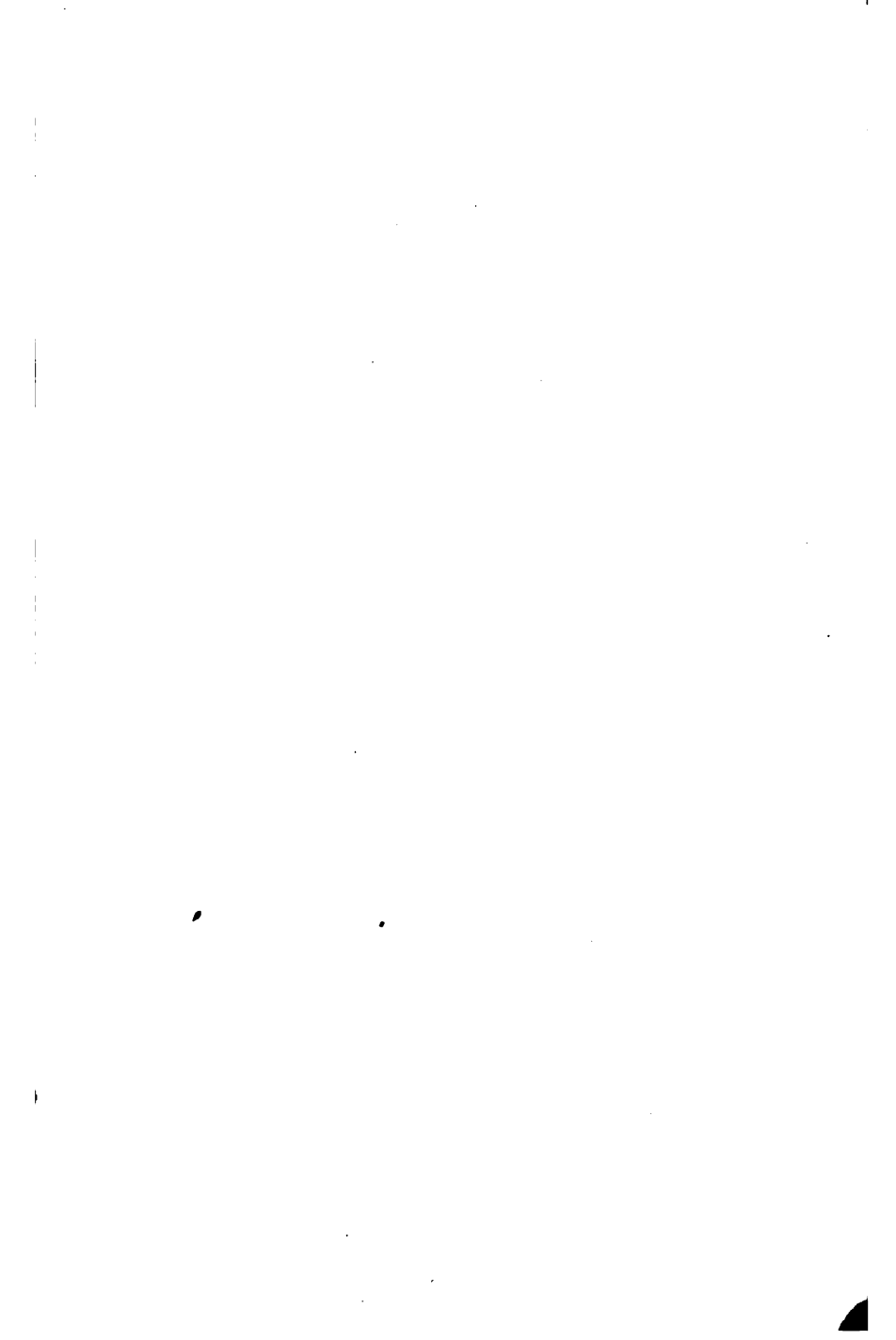
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AND OTHER POEMS

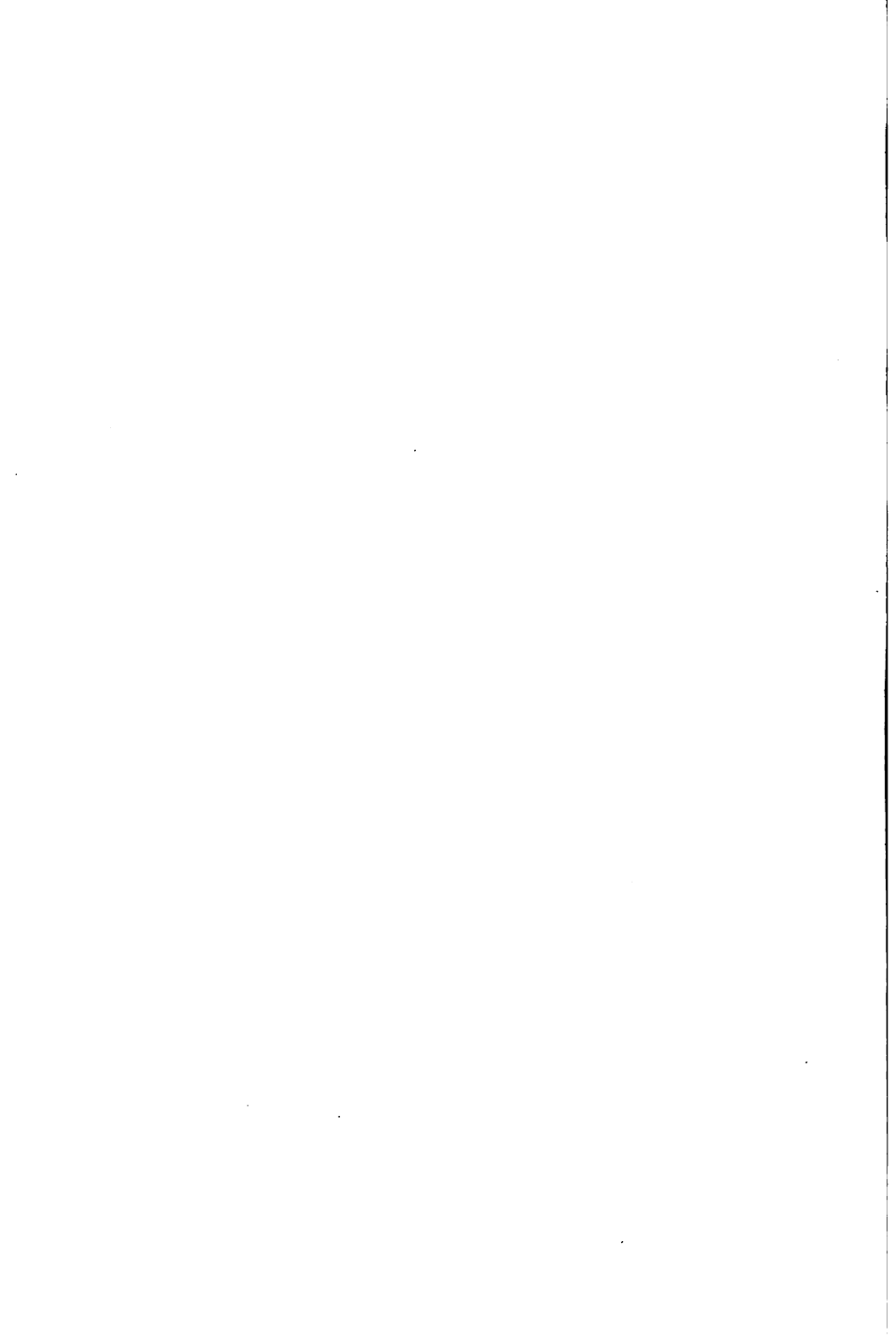
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A PRAIRIE PRAYER

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
HILTON R. GREER

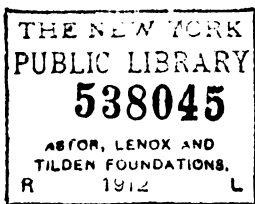
AUTHOR OF
"THE SPIDERS AND OTHER POEMS"



BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY

1912

S. G.



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TO
MY AUNT
MRS. M. M. GREER

FOR
FOR
FOR

Sherman, French
July 13, '912. \$.96

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FOREWORD

Two poems which were included in an earlier collection are given place in this volume, with lenient revision. Others originally appeared in *The Cosmopolitan*, *Lippincott's*, *The Smart Set*, *The National*, *Sunset*, *Pacific Monthly*, *The Sunday School Times*, *The Pathfinder*, and *the New Orleans Times-Democrat*.

H. R. G.



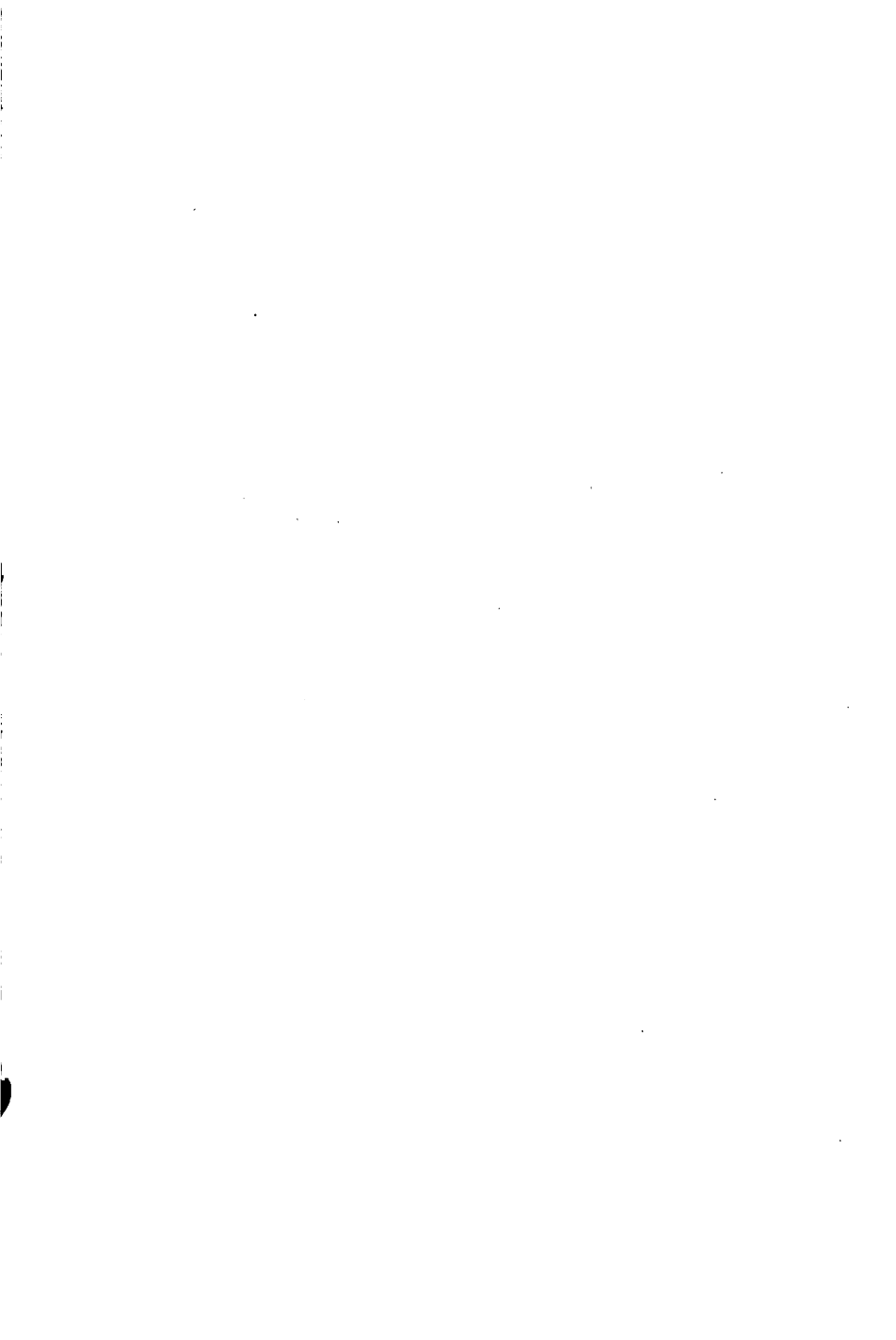
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**A PRAIRIE PRAYER
AND OTHER POEMS**



A PRAIRIE PRAYER

“and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her.”

—*Wordsworth.*

Not crouched, a-cloistered, upon servile knee,
With dull, down-groping eyes—
But (no less reverently)
Standing, beneath Thy searching noonday
skies,
With gaze uplifted, and with soul laid bare
To the keen cleansing of Thy sun and air,
I, Lord, with free,
Full, frank, unfaltering tongue would speak
with Thee:

Worn with the world, with man-made wounds
a-smart,
That I might heal my heart
To these wide prairie solitudes I fled,
Where—with no roof save Heaven overhead,
Green Earth my house by day, by night my
bed—
I might ungyve my soul, too long unfree,
And with clear eye that did but dimly see
Through the Time's trade-fogged, creed-
clogged airs,
Roving fair Nature's face, not unawares

Might look on Thine, O Lord, nor blinded be:
And with tense ear might heed 'neath Nature's
tone

The deepest underword that is Thine own.

And I have heard and seen Thee. Earth and
sky,

Close confidants of spirit-ear and eye,

Noon-clear to me

Have voiced and visioned Thee most humanly.

Yea, e'en the least of slenderest spears that
stir

Sunward finds tongue as Thine interpreter:

Blue blossom-script that stars the page I scan

In fragrant phrase proclaims *God loveth Man*:

And outward, lo!

Beyond all bounds the finite thought may span

Sweep these vast plains, a seeming sea that
rounds

And rounds — on — on — in undulations dim

Toward Earth's last, loneliest, utmost, edge-
most rim!

Yet this wide, awful sea hath certain bounds—

Thy will hath fixed, Thy hand hath set them
so:

Only Thy love, I know,

For Thy poor, needy kinsman, cramped below,

Thy pity for his poignant soul-distress,
Thy largeness, shaming all his littleness,
Are what these prairies *seem*, unbounded, limitless!

This have Thy prairies taught. And ere I go
Back to my world to bear a braver part,
Let me ensky them ever with my heart!

Nay, Lord, refashion me, reshape me so,
My soul, new-made, shall be
A prairie, broad and free,

With sun-warmed space for all Humanity:
Let winds of Purpose sweep it clean each morn
Of ills outworn and doubtings, shadow-born:
Let Faith spring lushly after storms of pain
As grasses after rain:

Let selfless aim and generous intent
Burst into blossom, rich and redolent:
Let thoughts, like teeming flocks, find large
increase,

Full-rounded grow, and strong,
That from their goodly fleece
The honest weaver, Art,

May shape some rare, enduring cloth of song,
To cloak keen winter from one shrinking heart:
And, lastly, let such deep serenity
As this rapt peace of noonday fold it in
Throughout all times of tumult that may be:
Yea, make my soul a prairie, Lord. Amen.

A SOUTHERN DUSK

THE blue convolvulus of day
Has hid its honeyed heart away,

And, jasmine-like, the yellow stars
Cling to the Dusk's dim trellis-bars,

While ghostly through the purple gloom
A moon-magnolia bursts to bloom!

LET ME DRINK DEEPLY

LET me drink deeply of my cup of days,
To the last clinging drop—I shall not
shrink:

Mine are not craven lips that would but graze
Where ruddy dimples dance along the brink:
Nay, to the utmost dregs, e'en though they be
More bitter than the harsh salt of the sea—

I shall not falter—let me deeply drink!

Elsewise how may
I call the chalice good on that sure day
The Giver of the cup shall come this way?

RIPPLE SONG

O, soft is the song of the ripples that run,
Cool silver in shadow, warm gold in the sun!
 O, lightly it slips
 From their lyrical lips,
As lithely and blithely the swift current trips
 O'er the white-pebbled shoal
Where slim alders glisten, a-lean as to listen,
And cresses their crinklesome tresses unroll
 That their lovers may linger
 (With tremulant finger
On finger enwound in the undulant mesh)
 Before turning afresh
To their dance with the dragon-flies, frolic-
 some, fleet,
Bearing with them a rhythm, elusively sweet:

 The children we
 Of the sun and sea,
From the keep of the summer cloud set free
 To sing as we go
 In our ceaseless flow
The gladdest songs that our glad lips know.
 Ere a dawn-wind stirs
 Mid the silken burrs
Or twinkles a gem on the gossamers,
 We shimmer away
 Through the glimmery gray,
Acree past the dreaming wild-rose spray,

Leap the liveoak's root
In a wild pursuit,
One after one: but our lips are mute
Till the gold breaks out:
Then, with silvery shout
And a jubilant dare to the dappled trout,
We open the chase
At a rollicking pace,
Away and away in a headlong race,
Ever fast, ever fast,
Till the goal is past,
And, spent with our speeding, we loiter at last
Where the white Noon weaves
On a grot's cool eaves
The shadowy stars of the sweet-gum leaves:
There the swallows skim
At their wild-wing whim,
And the redbird dips in our dimpled brim:
The hawthorn droops,
And in airy groups,
Like frail flotillas of fairy sloops,
Its spent snows rest
On our limpid crest,
Now swell, now sink, like a sleeper's breast:
The gray squirrels glide
By the water's side,
With bantering word: yet we may not bide,
But are off full soon
With a drowsy croon
Through the long, warm lapse of the afternoon,

While the whispering vine
Of the muscadine
Leans low to lisp of its autumn wine,
And mockbird calls
From the ferny walls
Are blurred with our babble of labials;
But when Dusk comes down
In her silken gown,
And faint lights blink in the distant town,
Where the sly stars peep
Through the brambles deep
We lurk in the shadows, half-asleep;
And when all is still
Save the whippoorwill
And the owl, a-hoot on the ghostly hill,
The white moon-maid
On her pearl couch laid,
We woo to dreams with a serenade
As silver-thin
In its dulcet din
As the lilt of a tinkling mandolin—
Subdued and slow
In its muffled flow
As a mellow 'cello of Mexico.

Ay, soft is the song of the ripples that run,
Gray silver in starlight, brown gold in the sun!

PRAIRIE MOODS

I

MID-MORNING

A DISEMBODIED soul am I,
Asweep on wanton wing,
Exultant 'neath the morning sky
O'er spaces sweet with Spring:
A fellow of the larks that dare
The crystal currents of the air,
A comrade of the winds that run
Amid the yellow blossoms, where
Ten millions twinkle in the sun:
A rover with the butterfly—
A disembodied soul am I!

II

MID-AFTERNOON

I AM grown stalwart in a single morn.
No more am I the pigmy thing I was,
The shrunk-souled weakling of a cramping
age,
But loosed from that warped shell of littleness
Which was my Self's accustomed habitude,
Full-pulsed, steel-sinewed, ruddy-hearted, I,—
Grown broad and strong as these brave plains
that stretch,
Majestic, vast, to far infinitudes,
Grown lofty-statured as the dim blue dome
Of sky that scans the world: a Titan, I!
The sun hath claimed my comradeship: this
morn,
While purple courtiers thronged his eastern
gate,
He spoke me fellowly: my soul this night
Shall hold rapt converse with the tongued
spheres,
And sit in council with the solemn stars.
Let come what chance another day may bring
To forge and shape new shackles for my soul,
I am grown strong to snap them—for this day
A creeping wordling walks, erect,—a god!

HEROES

ONE dared to die. In a swift moment's space
Fell in War's forefront, laughter on his face.
Bronze tells his fame in many a market-place.

Another dared to live. The long years
through
Felt his slow heart's blood ooze, like crimson
dew,
For Duty's sake, and smiled. And no one
knew.

POE

MESHED in midnight, misty-moonéd,
In a realm of men unwist,
To a weird harp, tensely-tunéd,
Sings a mournful melodist—
And his harpstrings are the tresses
Of a maid whom Death hath kist.

Demons from Hell's nether gloom-end,
Seraphim on shimmering wings,
Houris, dusk-eyed, star-illumined,
Hover near him, as he sings
And, with fingers half-unhumaned,
Wakes the sobbing silken strings.

Sweet—ah, deathly sweet!—the music,
Welling from his lips of doom,
Velvet-soft as notes of vespér,
Swooning in a haunted gloom—
Strange as words young phantoms whisper
In a hollow tomb.

Weird—unearthly weird—the echoes
Of each quivering cadence fled,
Ghosts, foredoomed to sigh forever,
Tremulous, unsilencéd,
Till Time falter, spent and breathless,
And Death's self be dead.

THE WAY OF LOVE

Joy, in princely palace hall,
Made a feast for me:
Bade a shining company
To grace the golden festival;
Then, what time the wreathen wall
Rang with mirth and melody,
Proffered up
A crystal cup,
Sparkling with ambrosial wine;
Love stood by with eyes a-shine:
"Drink!" he murmured eagerly.

Wan-faced Sorrow bade me sup
One gray eve with her:
Bade me drain a darkling cup,
Brimmed with bitter myrrh;
But, or ere 'twas lifted up,
Came a sudden stir,—
Love my trembling fingers stayed
(Infinite sweet sacrifice
Shining from his yearning eyes):
"Nay, but let *me* drink!" he prayed.

FOR APRIL'S COMING

ALL night the nimble fingers of the wind
Were busy at their broidery—and lo!
A tinted tracery of apple bloom
Wrought on the orchard grass—soft tapestry
Of shimmering velvet for the twinkling feet
Of blue-eyed April days to dance upon!

This morn they're looked for. Nature hardly
slept,
So eager was her ear to catch the sound
Of a first faintest footfall. Night's last
hour—

A brooding hour of hushed expectancy—
Stood watch a-tiptoe, and with holden breath,
While softly, like pale petals, one by one,
The white stars faded, and the heavens grew
sere
With ashen grayness. But, at last, a flush—
Pearl—pink—rose—gold—and Dawn awoke
again!

Look where the little shadows leap and play
Like laughing children! Sudden whispers stir
Where poplar leaves, blown silver in the sun,
Hold gleeful gossip; 'neath the old grey eaves
The sparrows chirp brisk converse; from the
hedge
A bluebird whistles in wild wonderment;

Then silence for a tense, a listening space:
What sound was that? 'Twas April's step!
 'Tis she—
Spring's darling daughter! Song's unleashed
 again,
And grass and leaf and bloom and mounting
 sap
Grow palpitant with vernal ecstasy!

O April! Sweetheart sister from the South!
Can hearts keep silent when the very sod
Cries out in lyric rapture at thy step?
The earth puts on new garnishment for thee,
Discards its wintry robe of somberness,
And dons the glad habiliments of youth:
So shall my soul put off its cloaking care,
And leap, new-garmented in robes of joy,
To greet thy presence with a sound of song!

JUDAS IN A TWENTIETH CENTURY MARKET-PLACE

JESUS, Lord Christ, whom my betrayal kiss
Gave to the frenzied rabble that mad throats
Might taunt with curses, clamorous for Thy
blood—

Is it for naught, O Master, Lord my God,
That through all years of endless, eating time,
Doomed, damned and driven, my lost spirit
roves,
Wailing and wandering? My God, my God!

Learned Man no lesson from my infamy?
Lord Christ, unheeding, they betray Thee still!
Daily they sell Thee in the market-place,
Gloat o'er their little silver, seeing not
'Tis thickly, blackly crusted with Thy blood—
Thy blood, Thy blood, O Christ!—for Thou art
part

Of all Humanity whose soul, betrayed
To the remorseless rabble of this Time,
Is crucified upon a cross of greed!

With swift, keen flame ope Thou their blinded
eyes!

Wake Conscience with ten million scorpion-
tongues

To sting them to such knowledge of their
shame

That they will toss their clotted silver by,
And turn once more to Thee! Not vainly then
Wilt Thou have writhed upon a dripping cross,
Not vainly shall my doomed and driven soul
Wail through all years of endless, eating time!

FOR A FLY-LEAF OF LANIER'S POEMS

Not vainly drawn, O stainless chevalier,

Thy sword of song at Beauty's high behest,
Guarding her sacred shores from vandal
wrong—

While bitter Death smote ever at thy breast!

Though fallen in thy flower, O my prince,

Of all Song's knightly court the knightliest!
Love's time-enduring laurels wreathe thy
name—

Brave-souled Lanier! White Sidney of the
West!

“WHOM THE GODS LOVE”

WHEN life lies spread before Youth's kindling
eye,

A field of valor to be stormed and won,
While Youth's exemplar, a puissant sun,
Mounts with strong feet of flame the morning
sky:

When every blood-beat is a bugle-cry,
Keen-clamoring like a silver clarion,
Shrilling to combat ere the hour be run:
Make ready! Forward! Charge! Then—THEN
—to die,

At that tense, tingling height—with lifted blade
Yet unencrimsoned, gleaming, were to claim
The flush of triumph, not its withering
wreath:

To know but knightly strife, not ambushade,
Mine, pitfall, treachery—nor defeat's hot
shame,
Nor conqueror, save indomitable Death!

WOOD-PATHS

"What's the good of singing?"—

Do I hear you say?—

"Earth's dull ears are sordid,
Stopped with gilded clay.

When none will hear or heed it
Why keep singing, pray?"

Just for joy of singing—

That's the wood-bird's way!



I

"WHERE THE SHADOWS BIDE"

So cool and shadowy and sweet!
I wonder if some dreamer's feet

Back on a soft blue morn in May
First traced each dim and winding way?

Ay, surely! Never step more rude
Might pierce wild Beauty's solitude,

For these are paths where dreamers still
May loiter, lagging as they will—

Where, beaconing at every turn,
The blossoms of the buckeye burn,

And where the elfin wood-winds strow
The sward with drifting hawthorn snow,

Flinging faint odors as they pass
Of grape and subtle sassafras:

Or else, outstretched beneath the pines,
May marvel at the frail designs

Of delicate and spidery gold,
Sun-woven on the tufted mold:

And list—while echoes falter mute—
Low-cadenced as some sobbing flute,

The wood-dove's mournful interlude,
So soft with sorrow and subdued,

So sad and sweet, unearthly sweet,
That eyes grow dim and hushed hearts beat

With raptures, holy as if wings
Of angels swept the throbbing strings.

II

WHEN APRIL CALLS

WHEN April calls, and hill and coppice ring
With rapture at the silver summoning,
Wild echoes wake in solitudes serene
Where drooping dogwood boughs that overlean
Startle the slopes with sudden blossoming.

The light-lipped ripples through the shallows
sing,
The tremulous tassels of the willows swing,
And coverts dim grow glimmeringly green,
When April calls.

O brooding heart! Pluck out the venom'd
sting
Of poignant sorrow! Set caged Care a-wing!
Old ardors burn the blood and, coursing clean,
Thrill sluggish pulses with an impulse keen
To follow fleet the flying feet of Spring
When April calls!

III

THE CARDINAL AT BATH

HIST! here's His Lordship! Look you where he
darts

Swift as a crimson arrow from the copse,
Skims o'er the grassy slope with wings half
spread,

And, where the wood-brook leaps the stepping
stones

With sudden swirl of silver, makes descent,
Scans with approving eye the pool's expanse
Of limpid coolness: then, all daintily,
And with unconscious grace, dips softly in:
This wing—now that—now both—and head—
and breast—

Rises again with plumage fluttering,
Regains his vantage stone: with practiced flirt
Flings every side a shower of crystal spray!

Sir Artist, here is beauty that defies
The magic of your brush! So wild, so free,
Art may not claim it. Best preserve the sketch,
Limned in its cool, clean freshness on your
soul,

A scarlet study on a restful ground
Of shadowed silver, shot with golden lights.
Call it—why, yes,—“The Cardinal at Bath.”

IV

THERE BEAUTY STANDS

I know a tranquil temple in the pines,
A shadow-haunted and a holy place,
Where through thick boughs that arch and
overlace
Noon's warmest gold with softened splendor
shines.
Moss-muffled stretch the aisles, and coiling
vines
Wrap the low altar with a glooming grace
While the slow hours come with reverent
pace,
Like pious pilgrims to their old-world shrines.

There Beauty stands with finger tremblingly
Lifted to hushing lips a tingling while,
Till at the tender signal of her smile
The tongues of silence waken, clear and free,
And sounding nave and echoing transept
ring
With *jubilate* of glad worshiping!

V

A MOCKBIRD MATINEE

EVER spend an afternoon
Of a day in jocund June
At a mockbird matinee?
Never? Honest? Well-a-day!
Where've you lived, sir, anyway?

There's no hint of trade or town
In the path one loiters down;
Not a thought of shops or desks
Where the sun weaves arabesques,
Fragile-fair and fairy-hued,
In the wood's still solitude;
Not a thing but God's pure air,
Shine and shadow everywhere!

Pick yourself a mossy seat
In some dim and cool retreat,
And, with sighs of deep content,
Settle down, all indolent,
With your head against the trunk
Of some hoary forest monk:
Bare your forehead while the breeze
Plies its gentle ministries:
Close your eyes in rapture deep,
Feel yourself grow sleepy—sleep—
Then—a-sudden—hist! a stir
From some hidden chorister,

As along a branching spray
Where the sunbeams plash and play
Fares he forth in modest coat,
Flinging from his throbbing throat
Clear cascades of tinkling song,
Silver-sweet and subtle-strong:
Strains of soul-compelling sound,
Streams of symphony unbound:
Lures of lyric riotry,
Miracles of melody,
Soft at times, and sweet and low
As the slow and measured flow
Of some placid river-tide
Through warm meadows, lush and wide:
Or from breast aflame, afire,
Wild with passion, hot desire,
High and high and high and higher
Leap the frantic notes until
Fen and forest, haunt and hill,
Pulse and pant and throb and thrill,
Overawed and overcome
By the keen delirium!

Then, as if such riotings
Had consumed symphonic springs,
For a solemn space—a hush!
But once more a rhythmic gush,
Flashing downward, fleet and free,
Mad with mirthful minstrelsy:

Ravishing the raptured ear
With a cadence, crystal-clear
As the laugh of limpid rain
In autumnal fields of grain:
Stilling spirit-strife and stress
With a rune of restfulness:
Purging blood and breast and brain
Of their poignant pangs of pain:
Rousing noble aims and true
In the slumbrous soul of you!

VI

A LAKE AT EVENING

ABOVE its brim the hawthorn droops
A mist of blossomed snow:
Guarding its shores, like shadowy troops
The spectral alders show.

The dim lake dreams: its silver rest
No lightest zephyr mars;
Like clustered pearls upon its breast
Are looped the sleeping stars.

O soul of mine! when broodingly
Dusk hovers o'er Life's scene,
Like this dim wood-lake, may'st thou be
Pellucid and serene.

VII

A PAGAN MOOD

WORLD, go worship as you will:
I am but a pagan still.

You may mouth your little creeds,
Chant your anthems, count your beads,

Underneath your temple's roof:
I, from towns and spires aloof,

Just for one soft Sabbath day
Worship in the ancient way.

Gone the shrines of pagan folk,
Blown the sacrificial smoke:

But a sentient something clings
Of the old imaginings,

So that sward and sky for me
Wear the guise of deity:

Hoary hill and rugged pine
Own a majesty divine:

And in shadows soft and dim
Lo, I bow and worship them!

Scoff, you moderns, an you will,
I am but a pagan still,

Clinging to a faith that is
Old as all Earth's goodnesses:

He who, in her myriad forms
(Sea and cloud and stars and storms,

Spreading bough and springing clod,)
Worships Beauty, worships God.

VIII

MIDNIGHT IN CAMP

'Tis midnight in the immemorial wood.
High overhead the constellations dream,
Cradled in cloud; above them, mother-wise,
Bends a pale moon in sweet solicitude.
All Nature slumbers. In yon tent that looms
Ghost-dimly in the camp-fire's flickering
My comrades lie, outworn with weariness,
Soothed with rapt visions of the morrow's hunt.
The roving winds are still. The owl has hushed
His hollow hooting in the haunted copse.
The river's voice, that on the pebbly shoals
Made low and plaintive murmuring, is dumb
As lips in death. The wilderness is wrapt
In silence so intense, inviolate,
That acorns, pattering in the muffled aisles,
And eerie whisperings of loosened leaves,
Adrift in eddying circles to my feet,
Seem to profane it with unholy sound.
Hush, O my heart! We are alone with God!

IX

A HEALTH TO OCTOBER

HERE'S a health to October, dream-sandaled
October,

Queen of the quiet lands, dusk-eyed and
sober,—

Long be the reign of her, gladsome and good!

The fay folk have kept her

A goldenrod scepter,

Have raised her a throne in a deep solitude,

Where crisp, crinkled, dead leaves, gold-dappled
and red leaves

Mellowly,

Yellowly,

Flame in the wood.

Long stilled is the singing, the silvery singing,
Of brooks that down June-lands tripped
blithely, outflinging

Notes soft as the chimes of a clear-cadenced
bell;

The quail's shrill insistence

Has died in the distance:

Sabbatical silence wraps all in its spell,

Save when through the hushes some brown-
throated thrush's

Lyrical

Miracle

Drifts from the dell.

So, a health to October, dream-sandaled Oc-
tober,
Queen of the quiet lands, dusk-eyed and sober,
Long be the reign of her, gladsome and good,
And dark days not seek her!
Up, up with a beaker!
A health to October! I pledge her again!
A beaker of darkling, warm-beaded and spar-
kling
Muscadine
Dusky wine,
Bright to her reign!

X

WOODS BEFORE DAWN

FAINT as a footfall in some house of death,
Weird as a whisper from some haunted
shore—

Listen! a ghostly step re-echoeth
Along the forest floor.

Is it some restless leaf that wearily
Paceth till dawn his chamber, gloomy-aisled,
Or Summer's ghost that glideth eerily
Where once her glad lips smiled?

XI

STARS OF THE DOGWOOD

STARS of the dogwood, burning white
Through the dusk of my southern wood,
Aprils ago how you thrilled my sight
And quickened my singing blood!

Ah, in the hush of an evening gloam,
When the pageant of life is past,
Stars of the dogwood, lead me home
To sleep in the shade at last!

OHO, LAUGHED THE DEVIL

"Oho," laughed the Devil, "Oho-ho-ho-ho!"
 (And he chuckled full low
 As he paced to and fro
 In the sulphurous glow
 That his furnaces throw)
"There'll still be some fuel for fires here below!"

Scoffed good Mistress Devil: "And how do you know?"

"How?" echoed the Devil, suppressing his mirth;

 "My dear, it is simple.

To-day as I strolled through the streets of the Earth

 I chanced on a temple

Where men came to worship: the gold of its spire

In the clear light of noon made a shimmer of fire

 And the song of its choir

Through the echoing transepts swelled higher and higher

In a love-tide of sweetness that swept all the bad

From the souls of the wicked, that solaced the sad

And made the dull hearts of the sordid grow glad.

But the good parson's sermon soon shattered
the spell;
His theme it was FIRE—insofar as could tell
His sore-frighted flock—and he handled it well,
For he dangled their feet o'er the cauldrons
of Hell,
And a brimstony smell
Wrapt the deep-warning words from his lips,
as they fell.
And that's why I know
That we'll not want for fuel for fires here be-
low!"

Quoth Dame Devil: "Why so?"

"Because He whom we combat, the great God
above,
Is Love Most Immortal, and rules but by love;
They who serve Him through love, and glad-
hearted, shall stand
At His shining right hand:
They who serve Him through fear serve not
wisely nor well:
*Fear's the dim aisle that leads to the trap-door
of Hell!*
And that's why I know
That we'll not lack for fuel for fires here be-
low!"
So "Oho," laughed the Devil, "Oho-ho-ho-ho!"

DEATH IN THE HOUSE OF LIFE

PRITHEE, come in, friend Death, and chat with
me.

Think not, old neighbor, that I dread o'er-
much

Thy chilling clasp. My soul's not spun of
such

Un-Spartan stuff that I should shrink from
thee:

Nay! sit thee down, and keep me company.

'Tis true this House of Life wherein I dwell

Grants feeble shelter from the keening gusts

Of wintry woe; 'tis true I feed on crusts

While others feast. Yet in this cramping cell
I have known gladness: and I love it well.

'Tis but a little journey through the night,

A little journey down a shadowy road,

Ere the white portals of thy hushed abode
(Whence comes no sound, nor glimmering of
light)

Rise restfully before the wearied sight.

There dreamless slumber waits the wayworn
guest,

And sweet forgetfulness of scar and sting

Left by the scorpion years: and solacing

For all fierce passion-fires that seared the
breast

With eating flame. There, waits eternal rest.

Yet would I bide a little longer here,
Where Youth's red roses blossomed round
the door
And Joy's glad sunlight danced along the
floor:
Where Mirth woke music in a yester-year
And Memory makes each dingy rafter dear.

For life, at bitter worst, seems sweet to me:
Each cup of sorrow holds some nectar still:
White Beauty blows in April on my sill:
And Want's grim winter brings slight pangs—
for see!
Warm on my hearth Love's flame leaps ruddily.

TO A BEE IN A FLORIST'S WINDOW

SAD rover, from thy native heath beguiled,
Do the false kisses of a pampered rose,
Upon whose cheek but hectic color glows,
Thrill thee, as did the warm lips of the wild
Hedge-roses, or their sisters pink who smiled
Above the singing brook? Ah, one who knows
A captive's longings, shares thy secret woes—
Poor prisoner! He, too, is Nature's child.

He, too, has quaffed from cups of eglantine,
Has known the fragrance of the flowery
mead,
The wide, blue sky, the morning's pre-
scent stir;
Has beaten frantic wings, as thou dost thine,
'Gainst cruel windows, struggling to be
freed,
And been, like thee, the city's prisoner!

HEY, MY LITTLE LADY

TO A LITTLE GIRL'S PORTRAIT, ON WAKING

HEY, my little lady, with the laughter in your
eyes,

And lips like wee primped petals with sun-
beam smiles a-race!

Just three's the sum of summers since you
twinkled from the skies,

Little Lady April, with the springtime in
your face—

O hey, my little lady, in the morning!

Ah, dear my little lady, in a summer that I
know,

When the soul of me was darkest, though I
laughed with many men,

When the torch of Hope was dimmest and the
fires of Faith were low

Your kisses came and coaxed them into full-
est flame again!

For God was good to send you to heart that
hungered so—

So bless you, little lady, in the morning!

And O, my little lady, though the weary, dreary
miles

Withhold you from the older arms that miss
you, miss you so—

Still I keep your April glances and the sun-
light of your smiles,

And my soul forgets its burdens in the glad-
ness of the glow

Of your pictured face that greets me when
the mists of slumber go—

God love you, little lady, every morning!

THE MINOR POETS

SHALL Spring disown the simple wayside spar-
row

Because the lark, on pinions fleet and strong
Cleaving the cloud, a swift upwinging arrow,
Pierces her skies with song?

Shall Morning from the sparkling lyric treas-
ure

Her wood-brook flings her turn in cold dis-
dain

Because the sea in deep, sonorous measure
Moans out its ancient pain?

Shall Earth deride the host whose simpler sing-
ing

Tells but the lowly secrets of the heart
Because some loftier strain sets Heaven ring-
ing
Round all the peaks of Art?

Ah, no! despite the sneers of critics carping,
Spring needs her sparrow's chirp in bosk
and brake:

Morning her brook-song: Earth the hopeful
harping
Her minor minstrels wake!

SONG OF THE SPUR

O, it's ho and hey, for the wind-swept way
And the breath of the open trail,
Ere the East is stirred with a ripple of rose
Or the yellow stars grow pale!

And it's hey and ho, for the beating sun
And the slash of the slanting rain,
For the singing grass and the stinging speed
And the sweep of the stretching plain!

O, it's ho and hey, when the frenzied steers
Rush down in a thundering rank,
To the head of the herd—while my hungry
teeth
Bite blood from the foaming flank!

And it's hey and ho, when the Dusk has set
Faint lamps in her turrets high,
Homeward again where a far light calls
Under a tingling sky!

CACTUS BLOOMS

Lo, what wild beauty the dawn doth disclose!
 Beauty new-born
 Of the clustering thorn,
Silkenly scarlet and satiny rose!

Life, so I muse, like a cactus grows,
Thorny (God's pity!) with infinite woes:
 But Beauty and Love
 Are the blossoms thereof,
Silkenly scarlet and satiny rose.

LINES WRITTEN BENEATH POE'S "TO
HELEN"

O, SCULPTOR of the subtly-carven phrase!

How stately stands thy Helen—chaste, di-
vine,

Yet softly beautiful, as if were thine
The chisel-cunning of Praxiteles!

THE GHOST OF THE GARDEN

It was here in this dim old garden
Where a weird white moon-tide flows,
That the red life slipped from a woman's heart
Like the leaves from a crimson rose.

'Tis a tale that is tender with pathos,
Too deep for the touch of tears,
Of a love that lives though the lovers sleep
In the dust of the drifted years.

Mathilde was a Southron's daughter,
With eyes that were dark with dream
And brown as the sunken shadows
In the depths of an autumn stream.

Light-limbed as a sandaled sunbeam,
She danced through the wide old halls,
And her voice was as soft as the singing
Of birds when the twilight falls.

Caressed by the speeding summers,
She oped like a blossom wild,
Till her form wore the fullness of woman
Though it harbored the soul of a child.

Yet deep at the core of her being,
Like an ember, imbosomed in snow,
Slept passion that waited the coming of love
To burst into tropical glow.

Love came, as Love comes to the lovely,
All swiftly and strange and sweet,
Transforming the world to a wild-rose way,
Outspread for her joyous feet.

Armand was a soldier's grandson;
Like the best of his blood he stood
As straight and strong as the proud young
pine
That grew in his southern wood.

And oft through this dim old garden
They strolled in the dusks of June,
While their blood beat time to the fountain's
chime
As it sang to the summer moon.

And there where that dark magnolia
Flings shadow, she used to stand
And answer the signals her lover made
With a wave of her snowy hand.

But their bowl that was brimmed with blisses
Rudely to earth was hurled
When the sullen thunders of Sumter's guns
Pealed hoarse through the startled world.

For soon every slope in the Southland
Was ringing with War's alarms;
Wild rumors raced rife, while the shrilling
fife
Woke a clamorous call *To arms!*

In the bosom of Armand slumbered
The soul of his martial sire,
And it leaped to life when the trumpet-blast
Fanned his hot blood to fire.

He was swift to the front at the summons:
Unsheathing his grandsire's sword,
He rushed away to the reeking fields
Where the red-mouthed cannon roared.

He left on a summer Sabbath
At the head of a valiant band,
And Mathilde stood here in the gardenside,
And waved with a snowy hand.

And she smiled farewell though her vision
Was blurred with a blinding rain,
And her heart found voice in her bleeding breast
And shrieked in its poignant pain.

Thenceforth in this dim old garden
She strolled through the dusk alone,
But the once glad rhyme of the fountain's
chime
Seemed sunk to a lyric moan.

The lips of the swaying roses,
The birds in the boughs above,
And the wind in the jasmines whispered low
The name of her absent love.

Each night she dreamed of her Armand,
With his face to the starry sky,
With his eyes a-stare and his lips a-cold—
And she woke with a wailing cry!

Ah, God! 'twas the Southern woman
Who bled in the battle's brunt!
Through the weary weeks how her heart dripped
death
Through fear for the men at front!

One day from the Old Dominion
Where the blood-drenched slopes ran red,
A letter came from her soldier-love:
"Heart of my heart," it said:

"A fortnight more, and on furlough
I'm coming back home and to you;
Ah, wait for me, sweet, in the gardenside,
And wave as you used to do."

Rare gold dawned the day of his coming,
Like a cup overspilling with bliss,
And her red lips trembled and yearned and
burned
For the warmth of his clinging kiss.

And she watched from this dim old garden
Where her face like a flower glowed,
But the long day waned, and there came no
sign
From the bend in the yellow road.

Then her heart framed a thousand questions,
And echoed the thousand anew:
"What kept him—her Armand, her life, her
love?

Dear Christ! had her dreams come true?"

At dusk came a flying horseman,
Spurred on with the speed of Fate:
Was it Armand? Nay! a stranger in gray
Drew rein at the garden gate.

Ah! cruel the message he brought her!
Like a hero her lover fell,
With his sword waved high at the head of his
men,
Full charge into flaming hell!

And he spoke with his dying whisper
Of a dark-eyed maid who would stand
In a garden dim, and would watch for him
And wave with her snowy hand.

Then the face of Mathilde went ashen
As the sky when the sunset goes,
And the red life slipped from her woman's
heart
Like the leaves from a crimson rose.

Not a sound, not a moan escaped her;
Death-dumb were her lips and drawn;
But the light of her mind was forever dimmed,
Though the love of her soul lived on.

Years passed, but they passed unheeded;
She cared not, or slow, or fast,
For she lived in the years that were dear and
dead,
The years of her fragrant past.

And each day at the selfsame hour
In the garden shade she would stand,
A-watch for a stir at the bend of the road,
And wave with her snowy hand.

They found her here in the moonlight,
She had fallen asleep in the dusk,
While her soul went seeking its dearer soul,
Outslipped from its shrunken husk.

Long years has her dust been dreaming,
Long years 'neath the southern sun,
But a ghost still glides through the garden-
side
Ere the dusk of each day is done.

And strange! since her soul went winging
Through the shadows of night alone,
Each year on the dark magnolia boughs
But one pale blossom has blown.

See! there in the misty moonlight
By the wall where she used to stand,
One pallid bloom in the twilight waves
Like a *woman's snowy hand!*

For thirty Junes in this garden,
Where her face like a flower glowed,
It has waved—and waved—but there comes no
sign
From the bend in the yellow road.

SLANDER

Hid at the white-rose heart of fair repute
You rob its petals of their honeyed smell:
You gnaw the sweet from Honor's rarest
fruit—
Insidious black canker-worm from Hell!

SPRING ON THE COLORADO

THROUGH all the echoing aisles to-day
A blithe wind whistles like a boy;
The long gray mosses swing and sway,
The ripples sing a song of joy.

Here, where my live-oak, leaning o'er
To scan the quiet pool's expanse,
Sees, gliding down the crystal floor,
The leaves in rhythmic shadow-dance,

Outstretched on silken sward I lie,
And while I quaff from lyric streams
Low flute notes from some covert nigh
Make music for my April dreams.

Above me bends a sky as soft
As Love's deep eyes when rapture-wet;
Afar the dark hills lift aloft
Their misted peaks of violet.

The Time's mad fever throbs not here
Where slow white sunbeams filter down,
It pulses yonder, where uprear
The clustered towers of the town.

But here the truant dreamer flees
A cramping world of little men;
Beneath these brave, unselfish trees,
Clasps heart with good, warm earth again.

**"TO-NIGHT MY HEART'S A HAUNTED
ROOM"**

To-NIGHT my heart's a haunted room,
By one weird taper lit,
And ceaselessly athwart the gloom
Death-footed phantoms flit.

Ah, ghosts of dear dim dreams that were
In days long dead—long dead!
How the deep-sleeping echoes stir
Beneath your soundless tread!

IF SOUND CLAIMED AUGHT OF COLOR

If sound claimed aught of color, unto me
Deep, brooding grey would be
The sobbing of the sea:

And down dim aisles the mockbird's midnight
strain
Of passion and of pain
Would waft a purple stain.

AT MISSION SAN JOSE

IN this hushed heart of ruin the dead Past
sleeps,

Heedless that Time's incessant, soft, slow feet
Are beating stone on stone to drifting dust;
Round the grey forehead of each carven saint
(As if some lost dream of Corregio's
Had in a reverent sunset found its soul)
Quiver faint aureoles of pallid flame:
And ere they fade to wraiths of dimmest gold
Comes one who walks ofttimes his little day
With strange, half-alien footsteps—comrading
With days long tombed and morrows yet en-
wombed—

To drink the scene with worshipful rapt gaze;
And swift as if by phantom fingers rent
The somber curtains of two centuries
Before his vision sever silently—
And lo! how bravely 'mid the western wild
A staunch young Mission stands!

Through glimmering panes
The tremulous glow of flickering tapers sifts,
And, velvet-echoing on the listening air,
A vesper bell with softly solemn tongue
Summons the swart Franciscan unto prayer,
While from the crouching gloom a savage
creeps,

Wild wonder on his face: and sacred-sweet
As some blurred cadence of forgotten song
Outwells low worship from the chapel's heart.

Then the swift curtains close—and greyness
bides:

Grey ruin, grey dreams, and, deepening every
side,

Grey sunset shadows, silkening to dusk.

Yonder, clear-limned against a brooding sky,
Vibrant, erect, alert, as if a-watch

Beside the sepulchred and mouldering Past,
Marconi's wizard-child, the Present, stands.

"E'en thus"—the Dreamer's soul finds voice—

"e'en thus

Hath Man, whose soaring genius rivals God's,
Shackled the tempest, taught the lightning's
tongue

To frame in human-wise such potent speech
One whispered word may wake the utmost
shores

Beyond the thunderous spaces of the seas:
To-morrow's sun shall see him, swift and strong,
Mount the blue morning with a falcon's wing
To speak his neighbors of the wheeling
worlds!"

Thus far Man's *mind*, but hath his *heart* kept
pace?

“Nay!”—but the voice protests—“its steps are
sure,

Groping perchance a dim and tortuous way,
But ever upward, sunward, unto light:
Even to-day, though sordid eyes see not,
Blind Selfishness and Ignorance and Greed,
Corroding like these old grey Mission walls,
Are crumbling, crumbling, steadily to doom:
Let but a few more years on forward feet
Tread over them, and these shall fall to dust,
And free winds scatter them to nothingness;
Enlightenment and Tolerance and Truth
Shall lift like towers in our ampler sky,
Far-flashing to the peoples of all lands
Good tidings of that goodlier dawn to be,
When none shall have dominion o’er his kind:
When Each shall labor for the weal of All:
And each shall quaff as from a common fount
To fullness of pure Knowledge, living Art,
And that true Christliness which knows no
creed:

Then, imaged *inly* like his Maker, God,
And stepping with his soul side to the sun,
Man shall be Man indeed!”

CAPE JASMINES

WHITE as the holiest thoughts of angels be!
Fragrant as kisses from Love's sleeping
mouth!
Swift, at your touch, pale blossoms of the
South,
Rises the wraith of long-dead Memory!

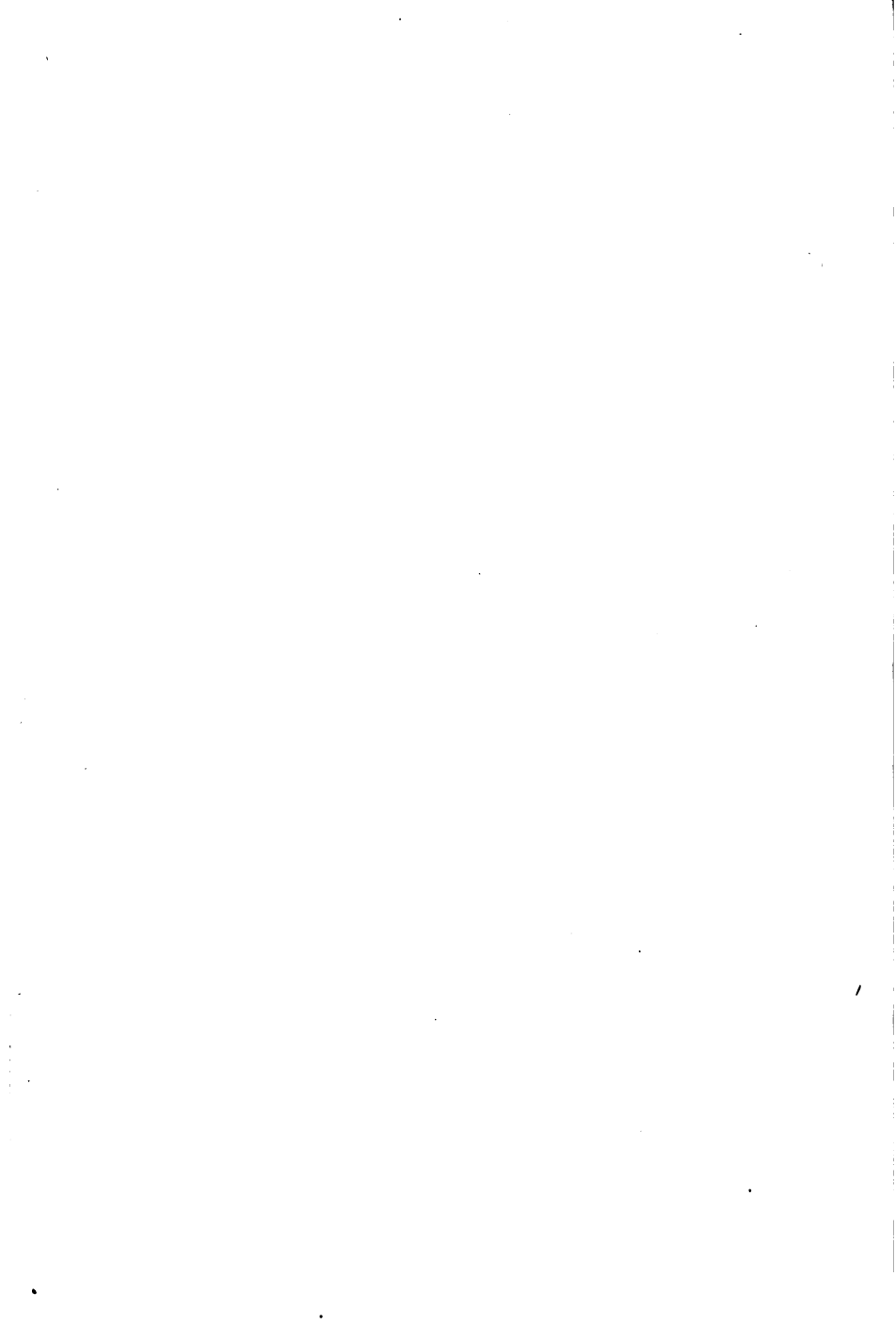
Then—tears! Yes, tears; for when I lift you so,
And to my brow your snowy petals press,
I dream—ah, God!—it is the old caress
Of soft, white, lingering fingers, long ago!

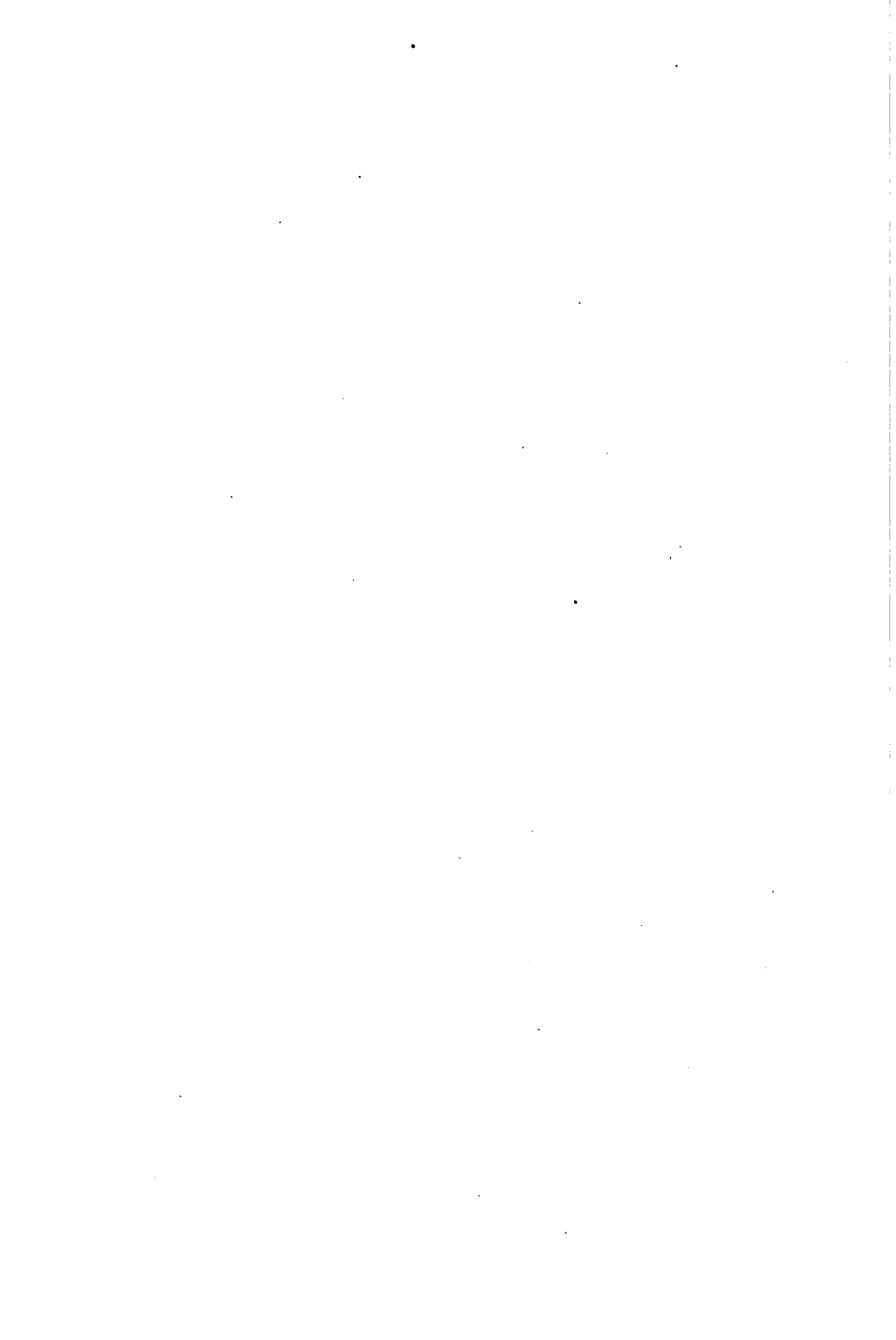
COLOR

THE wine that yields no luster as it flows	1
Grants little lingering sweetness to the taste;	2
The garden seems a bleak, a cheerless waste,	2
When Autumn steals the redness of its rose;	1
The sculptured marble's classic-browed repose	1
Quickens no gazer's pulse-beat (howso	2
graced)—	
But the live blood goes leaping, eager-paced,	2
Before some canvas where rich color glows.	1

Life without color is but life in name—
A tasteless wine, a scentless rose and cold,
A sculptured blank, a canvas drab and
dull:
Ah, that it woke in dawn of ruddy flame,
Passed in a noontide pageantry of gold,
And lapsed in sunset, warm and beautiful!







AB. 12
1



